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PHILOMENA JUREY/WASHINGTON

ELECTION '76: REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK -- TRAVELING WITH THE CANDIDATES

PART ONE OF TWO -- WHISTLESTOP IN ILLINOIS
(TAPE INSERTS AVAILABLE IN TAPE LIBRARY)

///EDITORS NOTE: THIS IS A REVISED VERSION OF A C.R. WITHDRAWN EARLIER. PARTS ONE AND TWO CAN BE USED INDEPENDENTLY OF EACH OTHER.///

ANNCR:

THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN IS IN ITS LAST TWO WEEKS. THE CANDIDATES HAVE CRISS-CROSSED THE COUNTRY BY AIR, MOTORCADE AND TRAIN. VOA'S PHILOMENA JUREY, WHO HAS TRAVELED WITH BOTH MAJOR PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, HAS COLLECTED A REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK OF IMPRESSIONS, AND IN THIS REPORT, (THE FIRST OF TWO), TELLS WHAT IT WAS LIKE ABOARD A CAMPAIGN TRAIN:

VOICE:

IT WAS A CLEAR, SHINING, BRISK MORNING IN JOLIET, ILLINOIS. BY SEVEN-THIRTY, BANDS WERE PLAYING AND THE RAILROAD STATION WAS PACKED WITH SPECTATORS WAITING TO SEE THE CANDIDATE -- THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES -- BOARD HIS CAMPAIGN SPECIAL "THE HONEST ABE." REPORTERS GOT THERE FIRST AND FOUND THEIR SEATS IN THE PRESS CARS, WHICH WERE EQUIPPED WITH TELEPHONES, TO BE CONNECTED AT EVERY STOP SO NEWS REPORTS COULD BE FILED BACK TO OFFICES ANYWHERE IN THE COUNTRY FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL TRAIN.

THE ENTOURAGE INCLUDED SEVERAL HUNDRED REPORTERS, PHOTOGRAPHERS RADIO AND TELEVISION TECHNICAL PEOPLE -- WITH THE EVER PRESENT MINI-CAMS (MINIATURE CAMERAS) OF TELEVISION -- PLUS MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, CANDIDATES FOR LOCAL OFFICES, RAILROAD OFFICIALS, PRETTY GIRLS DISTRIBUTING CAMPAIGN BUTTONS, AND A DIXIELAND (JAZZ) BAND.

JOLIET WAS THE START OF A LONG DAY, THE FIRST OF SEVEN STOPS THROUGH THE CORNFIELDS AND SMALL TOWNS OF ILLINOIS -- A CRUCIAL AREA TO BOTH CANDIDATES FOR THE PRESIDENCY. ILLINOIS IS A STATE WHICH COULD GO EITHER WAY IN THE NOVEMBER SECOND ELECTION. JOLIET ALSO WAS THE START OF SEVEN SPEECHES -- ACTUALLY, THE SAME SPEECH WITH SOME VARIATIONS -- IN WHICH THE CANDIDATE DELIVERED A BLISTERING ATTACK ON HIS OPPONENT.

THE PATTERN WAS THIS: THE PRESIDENT WOULD SPEAK FROM THE REAR PLATFORM OF THE TRAIN, TO CROWDS JAMMED INTO THE STATION AND EVEN SOME SPECTATORS PERCHED IN TREES. AS SOON AS HE FINISHED, REPORTERS WOULD SCRAMBLE ALONG THE RAILROAD TRACKS AND THE LENGTHS OF SEVERAL CARS TO HURRY BACK TO THEIR SEATS -- AND THEIR TELEPHONES. THE TRAIN WOULD START AND SLOWLY GATHER SPEED. AN HOUR LATER, THE TRAIN WOULD PULL INTO ANOTHER STATION. REPORTERS WOULD PILE OFF (JUMP HURRIEDLY) AND HEAD DOWN THE TRACKS TO THE PRESS STANDS -- IN TOWNS NAMED PONTIAC, BLOOMINGTON, LINCOLN AND SO ON. ANOTHER SPEECH, AND THEN BACK ON THE TRAIN AGAIN.

FATIGUE SETS IN FOR EVERYBODY -- AND LAUGHTER BECOMES A NECESSARY INGREDIENT.

THROUGHOUT THE DAY, PRESIDENT FORD HAD RECALLED PRESIDENT THEODORE ROOSEVELT'S PHRASE -- SPEAK SOFTLY AND CARRY A BIG STICK -- AND HAD ACCUSED HIS OPPONENT OF SPEAKING LOUDLY AND CARRYING A FLY-SWATTER.

FINALLY, THE LAST STOP -- IT WAS THE TOWN OF ALTON, THE SUNSHINE HAD GIVEN WAY TO EVENING DARKNESS, THE SPEECH WAS BEING GIVEN AGAIN, BUT THE OFT-REPEATED PHRASES DID NOT TRIP SO READILY FROM THE TONGUE. AND THE CANDIDATE LAUGHED AT HIMSELF, THE AUDIENCE LAUGHING WITH HIM.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- FORD

"JIMMY CARTER, WITH HIS FIFTEEN BILLION (THOUSAND MILLION) DOLLAR REDUCTION IN EXPENDITURES FOR THE ARMY, THE NAVY, THE AIR FORCE AND THE MARINES, WHAT JIMMY CARTER SAYS IS SPEAK LOUDLY AND CARRY A FLY-SPOTTER...FLY-SW...FLY-SWATTER. ..IT'S BEEN A LONG DAY." (LAUGHTER)

VOICE:

IT WAS A LONG DAY, AS MISTER FORD SAID, BUT IT WASN'T OVER YET. STILL TO COME WAS A THIRTY-FIVE MINUTE MOTORCADE (AUTOMOBILE PROCESSION) AND ONE MORE SPEECH -- AT A SHOPPING CENTER IN SAINT LOUIS. THE PRESIDENT USED THE PHRASE AGAIN AND THEN, IN A LAUGHING ASIDE TO THOSE ON THE SPEAKER'S PLATFORM WITH HIM, SAID --- "GOT IT RIGHT THAT TIME."

THE PRESIDENT AND HIS ENTOURAGE MAY HAVE BEEN WEARY, BUT HUMOR WAS THEIR COMPANION ON THAT LONG DAY. THE TRAIN RIDE THROUGH ILLINOIS WAS A MICROCOSM OF THE CAMPAIGN: CONSTANT PRESSURE RIDING WITH HOPES AND DREAMS THROUGH ONE LONG DAY AFTER ANOTHER, AND OCCASIONAL LIGHT MOMENTS.

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